



The Campaign for the Farmed Environment is encouraging farmers and land managers to voluntarily adopt land management practices that will retain and exceed the environmental benefits that used to be provided by set-aside. There is a range of voluntary management measures or ELS options that you can adopt on your farm to benefit the environment, whilst at the same time being agronomically practical.

Name: Richard Bramley

Region: East & North Yorkshire

Farm: Manor Farm, Kelfield

Size: 227 ha (561 ac)



Background

The farm is situated about 10 miles due south of York and five miles due north of Selby, beside the River Ouse (the River Wharfe confluence joins adjacent to the western boundary of the farmed area). The farmstead is about 20 feet above sea level, with the lowest point being only 12 feet above sea level, despite being around 50 miles from the coast. Flooding is a major concern for us as we have to bear the cost of any losses. Soil types vary from heavy/strong alluvial warps (silty clay) to very light “blowing” loamy-sand, (sometimes within the same field!), mainly grades one and two with some grade three.

Cropping for 2010 consists of winter wheat, winter and spring barley, winter oilseed rape, spring linseed, sugar beet and potatoes on contract for crisping. Around 14 hectares of land (including some permanent pasture in very low input grassland) contributes towards our ELS agreement.

What environmental management do you already undertake on your farm?

In 2005 we joined ELS and undertook a Volunteer Farmer Alliance bird survey with the RSPB. The results were positive with all but one of the farmland bird species were identified; 54 species in a total of 12 hours of surveying. We can add further species to bring that total to over 80. The survey will be repeated in 2010 to see if ELS has had an impact on bird numbers.

Our current ELS is pretty comprehensive; hedgerow management, four metre buffer strips along all ditches (a total of five metres including one metre cross compliance to simplify our LERAP assessments) sown with a mixture of six native grass species, field corners, 0.5 ha of pollen & nectar mix, 0.5 ha of wild bird seed mix, woodland edge management and very low input grassland on the river banks. We also gained points from the management plan options first time around.

Our new agreement is due to start in September 2010 and will need an extra c.1200 points to cover the loss of management plans. These extra points will come from more wild bird seed mix areas (rotational) and also by using some of the overwintered stubbles preceding our spring crops.

How will you be/are you taking part in the Campaign?

By continuing with ELS and by recording the balance of our overwintered stubble as a voluntary option. We will probably add some cover areas into the overwintered stubbles – a variation on the option that has just been introduced. I am also one of the Beacon Farmers for Yorkshire and Humberside and I feel strongly about helping to increase public awareness of the role and value that farming has in the countryside. It is also interesting that like many farmers, we never had “set-aside” – we carried on producing non-food crops on set-aside land in the form of industrial oilseed rape (winter and spring varieties).

Will you be using an adviser?

I will be relying on my own experience, coupled with advice picked up from CFE co-ordinator Alison Clayton, Chris Tomson from RSPB along with LEAF, NFU and others.

What are the benefits of taking part in the Campaign?

Benefits are as many as we can make; it is up to us to make the most of what I believe to be a great opportunity.

How does undertaking voluntary management fit in with your farming business?

Voluntary management has always played a part on our farm so CFE fits well here. Over the years we have planted around 10,000 mixed hedgerow plants and 2000 mixed trees. We have always used overwintered stubbles as a management tool, keeping wind erosion to a minimum by ploughing and pressing prior to drilling in the spring. Additionally, we have usually had small areas of “unpaid for” wild bird seed mixtures of varying types.

What is driving you to take part in the Campaign?

I firmly believe that as farmers we do have a responsibility as “custodians of the countryside” and I think CFE goes a long way to demonstrating this. I know that we can produce high quality food and still have a healthy and bio-diverse landscape around us. We mustn't forget that central to the success of the Campaign is for us all to have a profitable and viable farming business.